

The landscape design as a social class image. Considerations towards the new segregation patterns in Brazil. Bruno Fabri Mancini – post-graduation in Architecture and Urbanism – Universidade Estadual Paulista – UNESP Bauru / Brazil.

ABSTRACT

The Brazilian cities are marked by what is frequently called incomplete modernization, in which social inequalities are both, present and an active, in the urban landscape organization. These inequalities can be seen in the urban space and its structure. Since the 1970's a new model of real estate developments emerges and it is characterized by isolating the buildings in a protected and walled boundaries. This type of buildings became popular and spread around the Brazilian cities when the urban problems complexity – in several levels – has increased recently, putting rich and poor people side-by-side. The developments are based in an ideological appropriation of the speech of fear and in the construction of a social class image, manipulating signs and architecture. The construction of its own landscape or, as Sennett has said, its own “ecology”, is the result of these processes that make social segregation problems bigger and lead to decreasing of urban life in its diversity and avoid the contact of different social class people in the same space in a civilized way, which is the definition of urbanity. This work was supported by CAPES.

KEY WORDS: Public space, architecture, urbanism.

1 INTRODUCTION

It is usual in Brazilian cities the appearance and diffusion of closed real estate developments, walled and guarded, as described by Caldeira (2012) in her study about the new social and spatial segregation patterns in the book “Cidade de muros”. This subject has been approached by many distinct points of view, and it is criticized for its non-urbanity and segregator character. We intend with this paper to continue these studies and approach the problem for another point of view, which is the construction of a specific landscape design, based on signs of power and status, demystifying the ideological arguments used to support this type of developments as, for instance, the speech about violent crimes.

The city of São Paulo is elected as an object of study because it is an urban space by excellence and represents the contradictions we pretend to deal with in a deeper and complex way. A short panorama of urbanization processes of the city will provide us the capacity to understand the paths that lead to such valorization of private spaces, in which reign the social and economic homogeneity and, why not, an architectural homogeneity, in opposite to the huge possibilities of encounters and interactions between distinct social classes the public space can admit.

Building closed and protected spaces and consequently creating private sceneries to represent a social class identity leads to a society even more unprepared and hostile with differences, unable of recognizing in the other and in living with others a necessity not just for the friendly understanding and personal involvement, but for the co-presence of different social classes in the space in a civilized way, leading to a more qualified public life.

We begin, to accomplish the objectives we pretend, characterizing the urban segregation patterns in São Paulo to understand the logic that makes possible the emergence of theses architectonic patterns in vertical real estate developments that domains the contemporary landscape of our cities.

With this characterization done, we pretend to do a critical reading of the aspects that makes possible the emergence and diffusion of this architectonic model, so, of the arguments the support and legitimize to the real estate market the adoption of this way of inhabiting as a solution to some problems in Brazilian cities.

We expect thus to contribute for the discussions about the promotion and diffusion of vertical and walled urban condos as a model of architecture that, in proposing the subtraction of a portion of territory to build inside walls an specific landscape, contributes to recrudescence of the questions it intends to solve, as the insecurity feeling in the city and the alterity fear. This mines the possibility of making cities as a public space by excellence and weakens the notion of democracy.

2 EXCLUDING AND SELECTIVE URBANIZATION

The Brazilian society has met its urbanization process in a deep way just in the middle of XX century. This transformation from an agrarian society to an urban society is marked by inequalities in accessing land and to the formal real estate market. This heritage can be seen as a heritage from colonial and imperial times in Brazil. It is possible to see in the Brazilian cities formation, the same power structures that were in force in the four previous centuries.

In this context, it takes place a logic in our cities that act in the direction of the maintenance of the social disparities in its structure. This logic has as its foundation the concentration of resources in areas that are already urbanized and with a good offer of infrastructure, despite the illegal real estate market that is established (MARICATO, 2012) even in portions less structured of the territory. Still according to Maricato, the Brazilian city is marked by an excluding modernization and town planning is seen as an “instrument of ideological domination” that “contributes [...] to the appearance of a restrict and speculative real estate market” (MARICATO, 2012, p. 124). It is, thus, a political question.

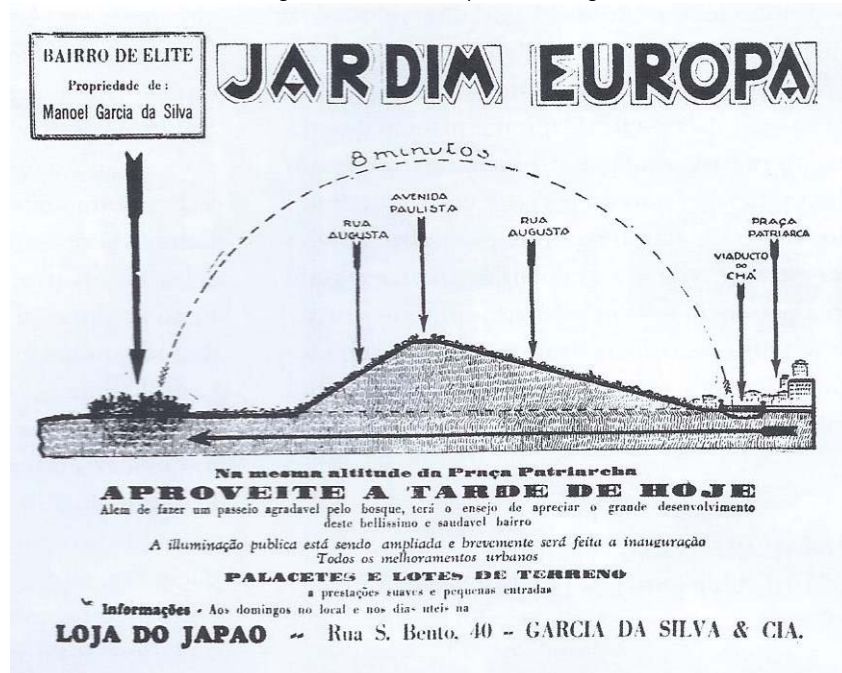
Milton Santos talks about São Paulo as “the best example of an incomplete modernization” (SANTOS, 1990, p. 14), where ultramodern and advanced things are beside the most whopping needs. This modernization is a selective one; it puts the richness of few near the poverty of many and creating a discontinuous and fragmented panorama. This process became worse in the last decades due to the functionalist urban planning crisis that used to be supported by a Welfare State politics and the advance of what is called neoliberal agenda, characterized by a deregulation process that ensures freedom to the market forces. According to Maricato, “face to changes, real or just vaunted, the urban planning matrix are called to change as well. And this process is subjected to the same influences of ideological production that masks the political conflict” (MARICATO, 2012, p. 133).

In this context, Vainer talks about “commodity-city” or “the city as luxury object” (VAINER, 2012, p. 78). As a result, he says: “We have here the perfect and immediate mirroring, to the city, of the economic openness and extroversion model advocated by the neoliberal recipe [...]” (VAINER, 2012, p. 80). Although Vainer (2012) refers to the Rio de Janeiro strategic planning context, it is possible to glimpse in Brazilian cities formation some of the characteristics present in his study that we can analyses in a deeper way. Among them, the concept of “solvent users”, in other words, those who have conditions to pay for the city they live. In this model of urban planning, inspired and diffused

from the experiences that took place in Barcelona, poverty becomes to be seen as a “landscape problem” (VAINER, 2012, p. 82).

This is not, however, a recent question. Sennett, as he was talking about Haussmann rebuilding plans in XVIII Paris, uses the term “ecology”, stating that one of the main goals of the reconstruction was the configuration of a specific and homogeny panorama, in social and economic way, reducing the mix of distinct classes in one district. This very same effort can be seen in São Paulo in the beginning of XX century with the appearance of the “upper class neighborhood”, with European inspiration, more specifically in the English garden cities. One example of this landscape manipulation aiming to represent an upper class environment is “Jardim Europa”, built in 1928.

Figure 01. “Jardim Europa” advertising



Fonte: SEGAWA, 1999

This social space segregation patterns, although still persists, have given place to new forms of fragmentation of the urban design and consequently modified Brazilian cities landscape. Nowadays the distance between rich and poor people is frequently inexistent. Some factors that contribute to this approximation process between different classes are: the depletion of idle urban land at a competitive value, irregular occupation of idle urban land by the poor classes and the creation of conditions to make profitable developments in degraded areas by the real estate market (VARGAS; ARAUJO, 2014). Villaça (2001) says that location in the city is determined by two main factors. The first one is the presence of infrastructure – water supplies, energy and sewer system. The second one is the possibility that transportation of people in their daily activities as work, consumption and recreation and it is only this second factor that has a structural power in the urban space and li is capable of change it. The popularization of individual transportation, however, turn these obstacles flexible making possible the creation and development of new urban locations in areas ignored by the market earlier.

As the result of this process of approximation of diverse social classes, in the last decades of XX century we observe the appearance of segregation mechanisms with the objective of make viable

and keep this notion of ecology we referred before. We are interest in, at this moment, looking at some of these mechanisms as ideological tools used to shape a desired panorama in the city, attached to a social class image which is intended to be built, in order to keep a distinction between classes that the urban tissue cannot ensure anymore.

3 PHYSICAL AND SIMBOLIC SEGREGATIONAL MECHANISMS USED IN CONTEMPORARY URBAN LANDSCAPE CONFIGURATION

Caldeira says that over the XX century São Paulo has had three distinct social segregation spatial modalities:

The first one took place at the end of XIX until the 40's and produced a concentrated city in which different social groups were condensed in a very small urban area and were segregated by housing types. The second urban configuration, the "center-periphery", dominates de city growth since the 40's until the 80's. In this case, different social groups are isolated by big distances: the middle and upper classes are concentrated in central areas with good infrastructure and the poor people live in needed and distant peripheries. Although citizens and social scientists still conceive and discuss the city in terms of the second pattern, a third form has been shaping the city since the 80's and changing considerably the city and its metropolitan area. Over the "center-periphery" pattern, the recent transformation are molding spaces in which the different social groups are many times very close to each other, but separated by walls and surveillance technologies and tend to not walk or interact in common areas. The main instrument of this new spatial segregation pattern is what I call "fortified enclaves". (CALDEIRA, 2000, p. 211).

Vargas and Araujo adopt the 70's, with the building of "Ilhas do Sul condo & club", in São Paulo, to mark the appearance of the concept of condo & club in Brazil – a closed, protected and guarded space that have a huge recreation offer as pools, sports court and even a theater. Still according to them, "this kind of real estate development reminds us the American gated communities – the walled spaces from the 60's" (VARGAS; ARAUJO, 2014, p. 156).

There are no evidences that forty years latter this trend is going another way around. What we see, instead, is that the typology the real estate market have been working with in the new developments is marked exactly by walling a big portion of urban territory creating a perimeter isolated from the public areas of the city. As Caldeira (2000) related, the walls are more present in the urban panorama of São Paulo.

Bauman corroborates with that when he says that "everyone who has the conditions acquire an apartment in a condo: it is an isolated place that is physically in the city but, social and idealistic it is out of it" (BAUMAN, 2009, p. 39). Fearing and insecurity in modern societies, more than a proportional relation with the increase of criminality, are related to individualism of these societies, in which the sense of "communities solidly united and corporations (that in other times defined protection rules and controlled the application of these rules) was substituted by individual power of taking care of itself and making by itself. (BAUMAN, 2009, p. 16).

This modelo f real estate development, which is so scattered nowadays, is

Changing the city panorama, its segregation pattern and the public space and interactions characters between classes [...]. All types of fortified enclaves share some basic characteristics. They are private property for collective use and emphasizes private and restrict values at the same time they devalue what is public and open in the city. (CALDEIRA, 2000, p. 258).

The demarcation instruments of these private territories are physical and symbolic mechanisms of spatial and social segregation. It comprises since walls, electrified fences, surveillance cameras, grills and gates until private security companies, passing through the affirmation of an identity by using symbolic values represented by its own esthetics and language; it is the construction of a controlled panorama, so.

Figure 02. Real Estate Development implantation



Source: <http://www.cyrela.com.br/imovel/auge-home-resort-apartamento-sao-bernardo-sao-bernardo-do-campo-sp>

Problematizing the appearance and diffusion of this architectonic model is an important step in trying to demystify the argument that put building these spaces as a need that the market answers to. In opposite, is proposed to think on this landscape shaping as a marketing strategy supported by an ideological speech – for example, the fear and urban violence speeches – and a class image construction, using architectonical rhetorical figures to create an aesthetic, a communication pattern and a marketing language with the objective of legitimize even more the valorization of private spheres of living over qualitative concepts of public spaces.

4. IDEOLOGICAL FEAR SPEECH AS A LEGITIMIZING ASPECT OF PRIVATE PAISAGE

The main argument pro the implantation of this real estate development model concentrating a great recreation and service spaces is that the city is a hostile and dangerous place. This is a legitimate fear, in that is the feeling of protecting life. However, it is possible to propose reading the data available to corroborates with the demystifying that speech as a legitimizing aspect and the base of the diffusion of this type of architecture. It is possible to argue the diffusion of walled and guarded real estate developments, as we describe in this paper, do not contribute to decrease the insecurity feeling experienced by the inhabitants of medium and large Brazilian cities, even inside the boundaries the developments enclose.

According to Bauman

the modern fears have begun with the reduction of state control (known as deregulation) and its individualistic consequences, at the moment parenthood between man and man – apparently eternal or at least present since

immemorial times -, as well as the friendship bonds established in a community or corporation, was weakened or even broken. The way solid modernity managed fear tended to change “natural” bonds – irretrievably damaged – for other bonds, artificial ones, that assume the association form, unions, and part-time collective (almost permanent, however, because consolidated for shared daily routine). Solidarity succeeded brotherhood as the best defense way to a more uncertain destiny. The solidarity dissolution represents the end of the universe in which solid modernity managed fear. Now, it is time to dismantle or destroy the modern protection – artificial, conceived [...]. When solidarity is substituted by competition, individuals feel abandoned to themselves, delivered to their own resources. (BAUMAN, 2009, p. 20).

The obvious answer to this disbelief in State as a security provider is the fortification of the modern individualistic feeling and then each individual will take care of itself with the resources they have or they can afford. Building walled communities, in this case, emerges as a possible self-preservation strategy, against an urban environment constantly characterized as hostile, since it housing for all sorts of people.

This way,

the dwellers of walled real estate developments keep themselves out of baffling, disturbing and vaguely threatening – because it is turbulent and confuse – urban life, to put themselves inside a tranquility and safety “oasis”. However, because of that, they maintain all the other out of decent and safe places, and they are absolutely convinced to conserve and defend to life this standard; they keep the others in the same desolate streets they pretend to leave outside, without caring to the price they have to pay for. (BAUMAN, 2009, p. 40).

Paradoxically, data publicized by the municipality of São Paulo show that it is in the peripheral areas where the violent crimes that take place in the city happens – far away from the areas walled and protected condos as we describe area concentrated. In other hand, in these richer areas, well structured – in which almost all of these developments are – we see an increase of the incidence of robbery and theft. These data corroborates with the thesis that not only it is an illusion the sensation of security provided by this type of architecture, but they not contribute to help decreasing criminality around.

It is the configuration of this “security and tranquility oasis” that Bauman talks about with from a landscape point of view and that we are interested from now. Specifically, we are interested to look the architectural patterns used on these space conformations and in the architecture references used on the creation of this ecology and analyses what supports these proposals.

5. GENERIC ARCHITECTURE? GENERIC CITY?

In one of your best known texts, Koolhaas uses the word “generic” to describe the contemporary city and its architecture. Generic, according to him, it is the quality of something that has no identity. As a result of this, we would have been living a global homogenization process, but this also can be a liberation process of what he calls “center enclosure, identity corset” (KOOLHAAS, 2010, p. 35). This city would be, to Koolhaas, an easy city, adapted to the new era, without moorings to transform, recombine, rebuilt itself.

Despite he offers no answers, the polemic questions Koolhaas brings us are an interest start point to think the study object we are dealing with. It is possible to glimpse in it some of the characteristics the Dutch architect attributes to the generic city. Koolhaas’s city is the advanced capitalism city. It is a given fact, we like it or not. He offers no supplies to think in solutions but tools to understand why contemporary cities are the way they are.

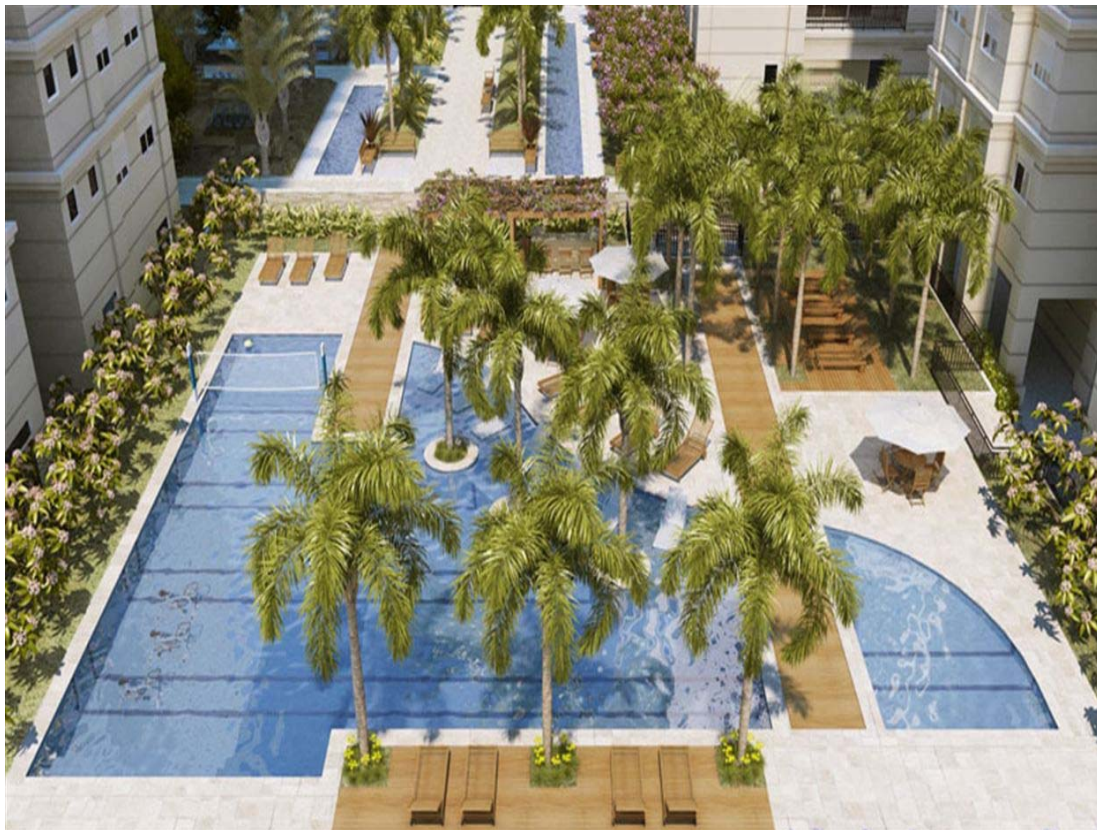
It is possible to think the closed projects we are talking about from a landscape design point of view, using the tools and questions pointed by Koolhaas. These projects are an advanced capitalism product as well. That implies to say that all decision took in these real estate developments comply with a logic that exploits and makes economic viable the project until its maximum. Within this logic, looking for well-located land, bigger projects and an elaborated architecture, besides good material qualities represents, to the builders, more costs. (MONETTI, 2014).

Put under the industrial production logic and produced by large construction groups, the typology of walled urban housing has few or practically no identity. We can, using Koolhaas's terminology, speak in a generic type of space production. The same landscape fragment is seen in diverse urban contexts, not only in São Paulo, but in the whole country.

The main characteristic of the real estate developments analyzed here is the concentration of multiple apartment towers in a big portion of walled land, shaping an environment visually hermetic to its inhabitants. Because the access is restricting, even pedestrian in these spaces, when they exist, are pre-selected.

The landscape design in the common areas of the projects is always well cared. The presence of elements as water and vegetation is representative. Fountains are often present, besides recreation equipment, changing according to the quality of the building. The architecture in these buildings is pretty homogeny. In general, it is defined by a fake neoclassical style applied over a modern industrialized construction, but without the premises that characterized the new architecture in the beginning of the XX century.

Figure 03. Common area of a real estate development



Source: <http://www.cyrela.com.br/imovel/auge-home-resort-apartamento-sao-bernardo-sao-bernardo-do-campo-sp>

Figure 04. Example of a tower of a real estate development as described in this paper



Source: <http://www.cyrela.com.br/imovel/auge-home-resort-apartamento-sao-bernardo-sao-bernardo-do-campo-sp>

Beyond the mere stylization of architecture, we should pay attention to the fact that constructive and projetual quality in these buildings does not represent the main constructor's concern. In fact, publicity costs of these projects "fluctuate between 3% and 6% of the general sale values, that corresponds, frequently, to six times the costs of the architectural project in the market". (SEGNINI, 2014, p. XVII).

This information leads us to a reflection about the contemporary concept of luxury. If the classical concept of luxury object was attached to the nobility of materials, rarity and exclusivity, the contemporary concept of luxury is connected to symbolic questions – having something that few status people have – aggregating, for this reason, value to the product. So, relieved of accomplish higher standards of quality in the final product, the utilization of architectural rhetorical figures as a manner to communicate a luxurious message and so aggregate financial value to the product is what moves the real estate market in this kind of development.

Real estate developments itself, broadcasted by many medias, corroborates with the statement of a social class identity attached to questions such as cultural sophistication, status and social distinction through consumption. The nomenclature of the buildings itself reflects this, using French names or using names referring to nobility. Architecture as well is seen in advertising and real estate brokers as a differential, always on trying to attach good taste image to the consumption of the product.

Figure 05. Closed real estate development advertising¹



Source: http://www.royaleprestige.com.br/prestige_home.htm

6. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Despite it is not a new phenomenon, creating a landscape that represents one social class has in contemporary times such a fundamental role on Brazilian cities configuration, especially São Paulo. Increasing urban problems in the past ten years has made distinct social classes dwelling close to each other; and this is a new fact. The real estate market have been responding to that complexification of city with the promotion and diffusion of closed and guarded real estate developments that have as objectives the intention to reconstruct a homogeny landscape to its inhabitants (economically, socially and aesthetically).

This model of development, characterized by large portions of land walled has some architectonic characteristics that predominate on urban panorama. In general, they adopt a historicist fake style as a manner of communicate principles admired by higher and middle classes. Advertising as well is settled to this demand and it is possible to observe the predominance of messages that denotes sophistication to the product.

Some of the questions that deserve deeper studies are the ones that could explain why historicist architecture has such this power over consumers and what the option for this architecture communicates us. Another important question is to reveal the consequences of this model of real estate developments to vitality of urban space and to urbanity, understood here as co-presence of differences in the same space. We hope this small paper be able to incite new investigation paths.

¹ Prestige is a life guided by what is most noble. Inspired in Paris, "Royale noble residence" arrives at Santo Andre. The most magnificent real estate development of the city. Shaped by three developments, to open majestically this enterprise, we present "Prestige": what is best in prestige, luxury and comfort.

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